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## SERMON DCXLVI.

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MERIDEN, N. H.

### THE LOVE OF HOME—ITS INFLUENCE ON RELIGION AND CHARACTER.\*

"Wouldst thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people."—2 KINGS iv. 13.

THERE is a sweet and touching simplicity in the answer of the woman of Shunem to the question of Elisha, "Wouldst thou be spoken for to the king or the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people." This reply evinced a mind unsophisticated in the ways of the world; without ambition in respect to its honors and distinctions; averse to change; and which found in the common and every-day duties of life, and in its own social and domestic circle, ample scope not only for the exercise of its sympathies and its charities, and the kindly play of those affections which are essential to the formation of virtuous character, but also the highest degree of human happiness. There is great force in the proverb, "Home is home, though ever so homely." It is founded on the great law of Divine Providence, which instituted the domestic institution, divided the race into families, and implanted in the human bosom the love of home, of kindred, and of country. Nor is there any thing more pernicious and mischievous than that cosmopolitan philanthropy, which pretending to embrace the world in its affections, contemns this providential arrangement, and would obliterate all ties of kindred, all local attachments which bind us to the place of our

\* Preached before the General Association of New Hampshire.

birth, and the sweet and delightful associations, which endear to us the scenes of our early years. Reformers of this stamp would have us attach no peculiar sacredness to parents or friends, to home or country, but would have us cherish the same feelings and the same interest for all men, for all scenes, and for all lands. Equally pernicious too is that *utilitarianism* which regards the world only as a theatre for the display of talent, or the gratification of ambition; or as a field where avarice may reap the richest harvests of wealth, or sensualism secure the most ample means of indulgence.

Now it may be safely affirmed that he who has never had his feelings intensely excited in favor of individuals, will not feel as he ought towards mankind in general. He who has no strong home attachments will have no strong attachments; he who has no love of country—will have no proper regard for the world at large.

As we are in great danger of losing sight of first principles amidst the excitements of ambition, the whirl of business, and the allurements of pleasure, it may not be improper on the present occasion to consider the influence which a right home-feeling has upon the interests of religion, the formation of the highest style of virtuous character, and the production of the greatest degree of happiness.

The love of home, of kindred, and of country, though not strictly a religious affection—yet religious affection has such an affinity with it, is so connected with it, touches it at so many points, and depends so much upon it for its full development, that they are rarely, if ever, disjoined in the same mind. The love of our friends, of our home, of our country, seems almost a necessary antecedent to the love of God, and the full perfection of the graces of the Spirit. Hence religion never flourishes except in places where the population is permanently established in families; and where the character of the young is moulded by the kindness, the attentions, the instructions, the discipline of parental love, and the associations which cluster around the domestic circle, and the familiar scenes of childhood and youth. There may be exceptions, but so rare as not to affect the general principle. That the love of kindred, of home, and of country, is essential to the best interests of religion, the highest style of virtuous character, and the production of the greatest amount of happiness enjoyed in our present state. This will appear, if we consider,

I. The peculiar fitness of the family state for the early development and perfection of the natural affections. The family is the only proper school for the natural affections. There the young heart finds something to love and to reciprocate its love in the very infancy of being. It wakes up to consciousness under the smiles and caresses of a mother and the fond endearments of a father. Their expressions of affection call into exercise similar

affections in its own bosom. Nor is the intensity of these feelings dissipated by a multiplicity of objects; nor chilled and repressed by indifference and neglect. The filial and fraternal affections find in a well regulated household, and among brothers and sisters, an atmosphere genial to their growth and expansion. The objects and scenes around the homestead, as they become familiar and associated by pleasant recollections, serve to strengthen these feelings. The house, the garden, the tree, the rock, the brook, the hill, the meadow—where we played in childhood—strengthen the ties of attachment to the friends who form the centre of attraction to our little world of home. Thus silently, and gradually, and sweetly are the natural affections unfolded and strengthened before we go out into the world, to be chilled by its selfishness, or hardened by its depravity and crime. The difference in respect to all that is winning and lovely in natural affection between a child brought up amidst the endearments of a good home and one who has not enjoyed such family nurture, is more striking than the most delicious of cultivated fruits and the same fruits in their native wildness. This will appear, if we consider,

II. That home is the best school for early mental training. There is a most important training for the mind before it receives any from the formal processes of education. This training is best received amidst the sweet and delightful associations of home. Our rudimental knowledge is, or might be, best obtained from the lips of a mother or the mouth of a father. For then it is received naturally and cordially, without that tasking and coercion which renders much of what we know like that obtained by Adam in eating the forbidden fruit. For at home, both the mind and the heart are, or ought to be, cultivated at the same time. Hence it is always better for the child to acquire as much of its education as possible under the paternal roof. The growth of the affections then keep pace with the expansion of the mental powers. Knowledge is not divorced from feeling, nor do we have the unnatural spectacle of a head without a heart. This will appear,

III. If we consider the influence of family discipline in regulating and restraining the passions. The constitution of the family implies subjection to their parents on the part of children. Order, therefore, of some kind, is essential to its existence. And where order is properly enforced, the child early learns to submit to the will of another, and to yield obedience to rightful authority. Restraint is imposed upon our wild and wayward propensities; and the passions are curbed and checked before they obtain the complete control of reason and conscience. In every well regulated household authority is blended with affection. Parental love tempers the exercise of power so as to prevent undue

severity; and filial affection induces the child to yield to the wishes and commands of its parents without imbibing hatred in regard to the authority that enforces obedience. Thus a habit of self-control is early formed, which exerts a salutary influence over the whole subsequent life. It is in the family, if any where, that the passions are so regulated and restrained as to prevent the evils of their excessive indulgence. For though, in many cases, there is an utter failure—and though, in none, all that is desirable is secured—yet it is to the family that society owes all its safety from the fury of unkindled passion, and individuals their exemption from the evils which result from unregulated desire. Every good home is a school of discipline for the passions. Its necessary restraints, its constant duties, its varied labors, its reciprocal attachments, its mutual conceptions, its common interests, joys, trials, and sorrows, while they do not eradicate, all tend to bring the passions into subserviency to the higher and nobler purposes of existence. This will appear,

IV. If we consider the influence of home in the formation of habits of useful industry. Toil and effort is the price of every thing good or great. The mind cannot be educated without study, nor the body remain sound and vigorous without exercise. The law of labor, therefore, is not only essential to our existence, but also to our happiness. Now to the end that the law of labor may be cheerfully and sweetly obeyed, habits of industry must be formed in early life. And where can this be done so easily and in a manner so likely to secure the great blessings of industry as in the family, amidst the gentle attractions and associations of home? There the child has, or ought to have, constantly the example and encouragement of those it loves. Its tasks are assigned by those who have, or who should have, a proper regard to its health and strength. Its mistakes are rectified with patience; its failures are watched with sympathy; and its successes rewarded with approbation. There labor is so judiciously blended with recreation, that toil does not degenerate into drudgery, nor amusement become an employment. There the habit of industry becomes incorporated with our being; it accompanies us through life; it enters into all our pursuits; it contributes to all our successes, and thus prepares us to find enjoyment in all our efforts. Hence,

V. The love of home, of kindred, and of country, calls into exercise some of the highest and noblest qualities of our nature in behalf of their well-being and prosperity. Aside from religion, the brightest page in the annals of our race, is that which is connected with the love of home, of kindred, and of country. Home is, or ought to be, the sacred spot where the heart has garnered up its choicest earthly treasures. It is there that virtuous

character is formed. There the natural affections are developed and fostered. There the mind begins to expand; there the passions are regulated and restrained; and there those habits are formed which ensure to industry its honest joys and appropriate rewards. All our sweetest and tenderest recollections and associations are connected with our home.

Now our country is our home, in a wider sense. The very things, therefore, which endear home to us, bind us with strongest cords to our country. The whole land where that home is situated is ours. Its government is ours; its laws are ours. Its defence is the defence of all that we hold most dear. Its prosperity sheds brighter rays of happiness over our own domestic circle. We take a pride in its great names; we imbibe the spirit of its literature; we feel a thrilling interest in the glorious events of its history; we burn with indignation in view of its wrongs and injuries. Hence, next to our homes, our greatest sacrifices and self-denials will be in behalf of our country. This rouses to high activity our mental powers; this tasks to the utmost our physical energies. We lay our time, our wealth, and even life itself, on the altar of patriotism.

“Breathes there a man with soul so dead,  
Who never to him-self hath said,  
This is my own, my native land,  
When home his footsteps he has turned  
From wandering on a foreign strand.  
If such there be, go mark him well,  
To him no minstrel praises swell.  
High though his titles, proud his name,  
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim,  
Despite his titles, power and pelf,  
The wretch concentrated all in self,  
Living shall forfeit fair renown,  
And doubly dying shall go down  
To the vile dust from whence he sprung,  
Unwept, unhonored, and unsung.”—*Scott*.

Had there been no home for Washington to love, and in which was laid the foundation of his character, would he have acted the great part he did in our revolutionary contest? Had there been no such homes for the formation of virtuous character as the families of the Pilgrim Fathers and their descendants afforded, would this nation have risen to its present eminence, or would there have been secured to its inhabitants the possession of such blessings as we now enjoy?

VI. This home-feeling affords a soil congenial to the growth of piety, as exhibited in love to God and our neighbor. The love of home and kindred is not religion. Patriotism is not religion. They may exist in a high degree, perhaps, though not in their purest form, in the absence of religious principle. Still it may be doubted whether true religion is ever found to exist in a heart



where the love of home, of kindred, and of country is wanting. The truth is, where the character is wanting in this respect, it is generally wanting in every other. He who is deficient in regard to domestic duties, will always be deficient in regard to his duty to God. The love of God therefore is always associated with the reverence and love of parents. The love of our Maker is ever found in close alliance with love of our kindred. He who cherishes no proper regard for his country, will cherish none for the whole world. I admit that when religion is embraced, and exerts its proper influence on the heart, its tendency is to bring into exercise right feelings in respect to all our civil, social, and domestic relations, even in those who have been wanting in respect to all relative duties. But this only confirms the remark, that love of home, of kindred, and of country, is essential to the formation of virtuous character. Because, religion and philanthropy and patriotism are never long disjoined in the same mind. Besides, those are much less likely to be affected by religious truth who have not been brought up under the influence of a well regulated home; and whose bosoms do not glow with filial and fraternal love, and patriotic devotion. The gospel has always been most successful in places where there are the greatest number of well regulated households; and its most lovely and useful converts are those who have been trained around the domestic fireside, and amid the genial influences and delightful associations of a happy home. That glowing love of home, of friends and country, which produced in the heart of Paul "continual sorrow for his brethren, his kindred according to the flesh," made him just so much the better missionary to the heathen. He who could wish himself "accursed from Christ" for the sake of his own people, was just the man to endure all kinds of privations and hardships, and to occupy any field (and on a very low salary too), in the difficult and toilsome work of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. So it ever has been—so it ever will be. The foundation of the highest style of virtuous character is always laid amidst the sweet and delightful associations of home, of neighborhood, and of country. How sweetly does the religious element blend with the domestic and social affections in the heart of David, whose youth was spent amidst the quiet scenes of Bethlehem and the rural occupations of a shepherd's life! It was the love of home and of country, as well as the love of God, which preserved the piety of the captive Jews amidst the idolatries and corruptions of Babylon. "We wept," said they, "when we remembered Zion." "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning: if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not prefer Jerusalem above my chief joy." What tenderness does patriotism give to the piety of Jeremiah when he exclaims, "O that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might

weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" Our blessed Lord too felt as a man and as a patriot, as well as the Saviour of sinners, when he poured out that thrilling lamentation, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" We learn from this subject,

1. The importance of cultivating the love of home and of country. We have seen that the love of home, of kindred, and of country, is essential to the best interests of religion and the formation of the highest style of virtuous character, and production of the greatest degree of happiness. As a matter of course, then, it is of the highest importance, that this home feeling should be early developed and fostered. To this end every homestead should be made as attractive as the nature of the case will admit. A character of permanence should be impressed upon it. It must be something more than a place of business—a mere work-shop—all the arrangements of which have reference only to the accumulation of wealth, and all of which may be changed, or parted with at the call of ambition, or avarice, or pleasure. I admire the virtuous and manly decision of Naboth, who would not part with the inheritance of his fathers at the tempting offer of a sum of money, or a better vineyard. There was something about that vineyard dearer to him than money. I love that home feeling conveyed in the words of the text, "I dwell among mine own people." Such a feeling does not regard "creation only as a huge spinning jenny made to twist out fortunes with," "or whose only question in regard to any spot in nature, is, whether it will produce any corn; just as though nature was made only for a cornfield." Or which looks up to the beautiful heavens arched with the lion of sevenfold dies, or beholds the gorgeous tints of the morning and evening sky; the smiling glory of the summer flowers; the varied prospects of hill and valley; of river and lake, of rushing waterfall and sounding sea, and asks with a dry, utilitarian sneer, "to what purpose is this waste?" This home feeling, however, is not the product of direct effort. It is the growth of years; the result of long residence; the interest taken by us in scenes endeared to us by joys and sorrows—by the associations of childhood—by the church where we worshipped—by the school-house where we commenced our education—by the companions of our youth, and by the old grave-yard, the place of our fathers' sepulchres. Now it is by such influences that the highest style of virtuous character is developed, and moulded into forms of loveliness and beauty. There may be nothing of what the proud man calls greatness in it, or of what the cold, hard man of business calls enterprize in it; or of what the cruel, selfish, fashionable voluptuary calls pleasure in it; but there is in

it that which gives the highest charm to the domestic circle; which sweetens the intercourse of social life; which constitutes the untameable energies of a nation's strength, and which proves a fount of living waters to the church of God. I have no sympathy, therefore, for that system of education coming more and more into vogue, which so disjoins the head from the heart, the understanding from the conscience, as to call it superstition, should any refuse

"To peep and botanize upon his mother's grave."

Or which, while standing in the midst of the grand scenes of nature, instead of regarding with delight its great outlines, or more lovely features, is ever looking about for specimens and pebble stones. And I abhor from my inmost soul, that last and foulest spawn of infidelity and atheism, which would dismantle the homestead, break up the family state, confound the stations and duties of man and woman, and thus rob the domestic circle of all its sweet and blessed attractions and associations. This subject points out—

2. *One great source of national degeneracy and corruption.*

Time was when the population of our country was homogeneous, when there was a marked similarity of customs and manners; when there was such permanency of residence, as gave time for the development and growth of a home feeling in the minds of the young; when children and youth were not enticed from home or the family state, till the natural affections were fully expanded, nor till the character was formed, and the habits fixed.

But the opening of the boundless regions of the West—the annexation of foreign territory—the introduction of vast masses of foreigners—the construction of rail-roads—the establishment of factories, and the many and various methods of speculation, holding out temptations to avarice, and enterprise, and ambition, are producing, for the present at least, an unsettled state of things, unfavorable to the development and growth of the higher qualities of our nature. The consequence is, we are losing the genial hospitality of early times; simplicity of manners are every where giving place, not to true politeness, but to artificial rules; the unsophisticated feelings of our rural populations are fast becoming superseded by the impertinences and conceitedness of the worst part of city, village, and factory life. There are so many novelties to call us away from home; the facilities of travel are so increased, that we are tempted to be constantly on the move. And, indeed, many are constantly on the move. We are losing our interest in localities, except such as fashion deifies, or dissipation renders attractive. We have no peculiar regard for home; and the place of our birth is endeared to us by no sweet and



tender recollections and associations. We are in danger, therefore, of becoming gregarious, but not social; knowing, without knowledge; excitable, without true feeling; and in many cases religious, without religion. That deep love of home and kindred, which once a year brought the whole family together on the New England festival of Thanksgiving, and made it a scene of joyousness and gratitude, is now looked upon by many almost as a remnant of superstition. Hence so many early learn to sacrifice home, kindred, friends, conscience, honesty, religion, at the shrines of ambition, of avarice, of fashion, and of pleasure. The heart having no centre of attraction, nothing in which the affections becoming rooted, and around which its tendrils entwine, looks abroad for excitement, seeks happiness in novelty, in adventure, in speculation, in party politics, and too often, in the most criminal excesses. Too many of our youth prefer any place to home; and too many, both young and old, are ever ready to sacrifice it, and go to Texas, to California, to Oregon, to Australia, to the city, or the factory, rather than engage in the domestic labors of the family, or the rural occupation of the farm, and thus settle down amidst the quiet scenes of their birth place. Our habits, our feelings, our spirits are becoming so mercenary and grasping, as to produce perpetual collision between the employer and the employed. We seldom see now in our families any specimens of—

"The constant service of the antique world,  
When service sweat for duty, not reward.

But the fashion of the times is such  
That none will sweat but for promotion,  
And having that, do choke the service up,  
Even with the having."

The want of this home feeling, therefore, and the wide prevalence of a mercenary spirit, produces a constant desire of change, leads to the indulgence in ruinous excesses, and the perpetration of great crimes. A floating population can never long be either moral or religious. The graces of character, the training of the intellect, the cultivation of the affections, which are the product of home influences and established institutions, will never be found among those who have no other ties than ambition, or interest, or fashion, or pleasure. This accounts for that seething and turmoil of the social elements in western and south-western society, and among our frontier settlements, resulting in heterogeneous forms of error, and in scenes of crime and blood. The mobs, and riots, and murders in our cities; the strikes in our cities and manufacturing villages, the brutal scenes at elections, and on our railroads; the reckless disregard of life on railroads and steamboats, may generally be traced to a population, floating, restless, dissatisfied, and over whom the home feeling, and the influences and associations of home have lost their restraint. Hence we learn,

3. The cause of that discontent, which makes so many in our churches dissatisfied with their condition, producing such constant removals, as to reduce many churches, once flourishing, to a state of weakness and dependence. This at the present time is one of the great obstacles which religion has to encounter. For it is not true, that what is lost in one part is made up in another. The loss of an efficient church in the older States, is not compensated by the formation of several starvelings in the new, composed not of new converts, but of members, who too often have gone there under the influence of a worldly, mercenary spirit. For while the old church might have sustained itself, and aided efficiently in sending the Gospel to the destitute, both at home and abroad, these new churches are dependent on foreign aid for their existence and means of support, thus increasing the demands for help, while they are diminishing the means of supply. One productive laborer is worth hosts of alms-fed consumers. And though it is hoped and believed that our new churches will in time become fellow-helpers in benevolent effort, yet, if in the mean time, New England and the Middle States should become missionary fields, would not far more be lost than gained to our common christianity?

But aside from this—this restlessness and desire of change, has its origin, in too many cases, in wicked feelings and a radical mistake. There is a natural and proper desire in the human heart to better our circumstances and improve our condition. This may be innocently indulged when the nature of true happiness is understood, and the right means used to secure it. But the mistake has usually been, that men have sought it in wrong objects, and by wrong measures. Men have sought happiness too much in objects extraneous and foreign to themselves, and not in those within and around them. *Place* has very little to do with enjoyment, aside from right feelings and right dispositions, and the influences and associations suited to develope and foster them. Hence, wealth, and honor, and sensual indulgences, when sought as an end, instead of conferring happiness, only increase the misery and disquietude of the soul. The elements of true happiness are few, obvious, and simple, and generally lie within the reach of all. They consist in the exercise of right moral affections, in the acquisition of useful knowledge, and in some useful employment, which, while it keeps the body vigorous, does not overtask its energies, nor load the mind with vexations and harassing cares. Now with rightly constituted mental powers and moral affections, it will ever be found, that any eligible spot, where we can fix our residence, and to which we become attached by family ties, by home influences, by neighborhood associations, and by the means of intellectual and moral improvement, will furnish all the enjoyment which may reasonably be expected in this world. Now where, and especially in New

England and the Middle States, may not this be done? What people were ever placed in circumstances more favorable for the development of the highest qualities of the mind and the heart, and the enjoyment of the greatest degree of happiness to be found on earth? Why is there, then, especially in our churches, so much restlessness and discontent? Simply because men are looking away from home for those materials of happiness and means of improvement which are lying all around them. The still small voice of wisdom is drowned in the noise of the world's voices, as it comes to them in the reports of the gold fields of the Orient or the Occident; or in the roar and bustle of the crowded city, or the hum of machinery in the shops and factories, or thunders along the railway, or creaks in the strained cordage of the ships, or departing and returning commerce; or glitters in the pomp and circumstance of war; or is heard at the bar, and in halls of legislation; or rises with "music's voluptuous swell," in the saloons of fashion, or breaks out in the loud revelries of the votaries of dissipation and vice. What seems so full of life and enjoyment they think must be so indeed. But alas, they do not consider how little of true happiness there is to be found in the great world; in its noise, its bustle, its enterprise, its changes, its revelries, its honors, its ambition. They never reflect how little of true happiness there is away from the domestic circle, and apart from scenes endeared to us by the ties of kindred, by the sweet associations of home, and by the hallowed influences of religion. They forget that things most essential to our happiness and to the highest perfection of our nature, are those which money cannot buy, nor power confer, nor sensual indulgences produce. They are not to be found in courts and camps, in marts of business, in posts of honor and profit, in scenes of fashion and dissipation, in genial climates and fertile plains, or where "rivers flow o'er sands of gold." But they are found wherever there is a quiet home, an enlightened mind, and a humble, contrite, grateful heart. In the pictures drawn by the sacred writers of Christ's millennial reign, it is described as a state of universal peace, of permanent residence, of humble virtues, of universal knowledge of God and his word. *For then they shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat. For as the days of a tree are the days of my people; and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.*

## SERMON DCXLVII.

BY REV. LEWIS H. REID,\*

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### PIETY IN THE AGED.

"And she was a widow of about four score and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day."—LUKE ii. 37.

THIS is recorded of Anna the prophetess, who like the aged Simeon, was waiting for the consolation of Israel. Like him she was eminently devout, manifesting her piety in a faithful attendance upon the services of the temple, and in fastings and prayers continually. Three verses furnish all that we know of her history, and yet who would not prefer to have such a memoir of himself written than the volumes which set forth the exploits of a Napoleon or an Alexander? The pen of inspiration, it is a noticeable fact, is always very brief in portraying the lives and characters of those who have figured in sacred history. Of Enoch it was enough to say that, "he walked with God, and was not, for God took him." What a volume is this in itself! Of some simply the name is mentioned. But to have one's name written on the leaf of God's holy word is a more enduring monument than if it were chiseled in adamant rock or graven deep on brazen tablets. In the ruins of ancient Babylon a huge palace has been discovered built of bricks. Upon each of these bricks the same characters are impressed, which, it has been discovered, are the letters of the name "Nebuchadnezzar!" Thus did this proud monarch seek to glorify himself, and thus has he actually perpetuated his name in earthen structures through a period of two thousand five hundred years. But the implements of the antiquarian have at length exhumed those bricks, and now with the palace which they composed must they crumble to the dust! No such fate, however, befalls the glorious monument which inspiration has reared. The name written *once here*, is more honorable and lasting than though it were repeated a thousand times on the proudest structures of man's rearing. Indeed the very decay of Assyrian and Egyptian palaces and temples, goes to show not only how truthful, but also how *indestructible* a monument is the Sacred Word.

The subject which the text naturally suggests is *piety in the*

\* Preached on occasion of the death of a pious widow, aged nearly 85 years.

*aged.* In considering this subject, it is worthy of note, first, that—

I. Piety in the aged confirms and illustrates the promise which God has made of long life to those who fear his name. Every where throughout the Scriptures "length of days" is spoken of as an eminent blessing. Thus, in the fifth commandment, we read, "Honor thy father and thy mother, *that thy days may be long upon the land* which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The Psalmist writes, "He asked life of thee and thou gavest it him, even *length of days* for ever and ever." To those who "set their love" upon God, and "call upon him," it is promised, "With *long life* will I satisfy him and show him my salvation." So, also, it is written, "My son forget not my laws; but let thy heart keep my commandments: for *length of days* and *long life* and peace shall they add to thee." And again: "Behold that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy *children's children* and peace upon Israel." The patriarchs are regarded as having been highly favored in this respect, and hence the exact age to which they attained is mentioned as of especial note. The last words written with regard to Job, are, "After this lived Job a hundred and forty years and saw his sons, and his son's sons, even four generations. So Job died being old and full of days." The last that is recorded with regard to Joseph is that he saw Ephraim's children of the third generation, and also those of Manasseh, and that he died being 110 years old. The prophet Isaiah, in describing the effects which the reign of the Messiah would have, writes, "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child shall die an hundred years old." "They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the *days of a tree* are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." The comparison is apt—for some trees, the oak, cypress, cedar and others, attain to a great age. Adamson, who lived in the last century, a botanist and student of natural history, mentions one tree in Senegal which he judged to be over 5000 years old. There is a tree in Mexico which some are of the opinion is still more aged.\* A section of the cedar from California, which was judged to be 3000 years old, we have some of us seen.

But while length of days is spoken of in the Scriptures as a blessing, you will notice that it is always associated with *piety and obedience*. Thus it was said to Israel, when they were about to enter the promised land, "I command thee this day to

\* Barnes' Notes on Isaiah lxx. 22.



love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply; and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thy heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, I denounce unto you this day that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not *prolong your days* upon the land whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it."

There are many passages, also, which set forth the same truth on the other hand, such for example as these: "The wicked shall be cut off from the earth and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it." "Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine. The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him." "He shall be driven from light into darkness and chased out of the world. He shall neither have son nor nephew among his people, nor any remaining in his dwellings." "But thou O God shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction—bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days."

When, then, we see the lives of the pious spared and lengthened out, what an illustration and corroboration is this of the divine promise with regard to such. How does God seem to make his own word good! What a living exemplification do those have of the declaration, "Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou *dwell in the land*, and verily thou shalt be fed."

II. Again: Piety in the aged crowns those who possess it with *especial honor*. The hoary head is always represented in the Scriptures as a valuable and honorable possession. Thus we read, "The glory of young men is their strength, and the beauty of old men is the gray head." We find, also, the "*ancient*" numbered with the "honorable," and have especial injunctions with regard to the manner in which the aged should be treated. "Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old." "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head and honor the face of the old man." God also links respect for age with his own fear, for he adds immediately to the words last quoted, "and fear thy God." The sin of despising aged persons is particularly noticed. Isaiah, in describing the calamities which were to come upon the Jews, mentions this among other things: "The child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient." Similar disrespect for the prophet Elisha on the part of the children who cried as he went up into Bethel, "Go up thou bald head," was terribly punished by the appearance of two she bears who tare forty and two of their number in pieces! Wisdom and experience are justly supposed to belong to the aged. "With the ancient is wisdom and in length of days un-

derstanding." A respect for this wisdom might have saved to Rehoboam, who "forsook the old men's counsel and spake after the counsel of the young men," his life and his kingdom.

But age is never so honorable as when it is accompanied by *piety*. "The hoary head (it is written) is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." This latter constitutes the jewel in the crown. It is this which gives to it especial value, and makes it truly honorable. The patriarch Jacob wore this crown with the jewel mentioned, and received the homage of Pharaoh, a heathen king. Samuel possessed the same, and when he died was followed to the grave with the lamentations of the entire Jewish nation. Elisha was in like manner distinguished. When in his last sickness, he was visited by Joash, a wicked and idolatrous king, who wept over his face, and said, "O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." Of Jehoida the priest it is written to the honor of his piety, "And they buried him in the city of David, among the kings, because he had done good in Israel both toward God and toward his house." These are but illustrations of the high regard which piety in the aged generates. The reasons for this high regard are to be found in the respect which piety itself commands, in the fact that it is associated with age, experience, and wisdom—in the fact, also, that it has had longer opportunity to grow—has greater depth of root and strength of fibre—is more mature, intelligent, comprehensive. And does it not receive additional honor from the fact that it is so near to its culmination? Do not the glistening hairs of pious age derive brightness and glory from their nearness to the unfading and everlasting crown? The bride who is hastening to the altar never looked so sweetly before—the student who has finished a long course of study and is about to receive his honors, attracts to himself especial attention. Is it not so somewhat with the aged christian who is a candidate *for*, and is very near *to*, the glories and rewards of heaven? Separate, however, heavenly virtues from the hoary head, and the jewel is gone—the crown is fallen. For where can you behold a more "lamentable spectacle than a graceless old man only gaining by his score of years a proportionate score of guilt?" The white hairs of the ungodly only bespeak ripeness for wrath—wrath treasured up during all the long past against the issues of the final day. "The sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed."

III. Piety in the aged *commends religion to others*. The counsels of age and experience, men will heed if they will heed any thing. They are prone in emergencies to seek the advice of those who have lived longer, and have more knowledge than themselves. They attach weight to what is told them—receive it as from wise lips, and are very likely to act in accordance with it. In a similar manner great weight is given to the counsels of aged and devoted christians.

It is known that they speak intelligently, dispassionately, wisely. They have had experience. They know what they affirm. They feel its importance. Then, again, the fact that they are so near to eternity makes them serious and earnest in what they say, and at the same time awakens a more respectful hearing on the part of those to whom they speak. Their words have something of the same weight which the words of dying men have. They come from the heart, and are received very generally with solemnity and attention. Added to this is the savor of their *example*. They conform to the exhortation of the Apostle, and possess the characteristics therein described, "That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things." There is more to cause them to be consistent than is the case with the younger. Their passions are less strong; they mingle less in the engagements and turmoil of business; they have fewer perplexities and cares, are less beset by temptation, have been longer trained in the school of Christ; and besides all this, are constantly admonished by the fact, that while others *may*, they *must* soon die. These and other things tend to make them more watchful of their example, and to exhibit a character for spotlessness and worth, which the younger may well emulate. Thus Paul wrote: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." But not only by their words and example do the pious aged commend religion to others, but also by the *particular testimony* which their conduct affords, by their steadfastness and adherence to the faith—by the appreciation and felt necessity of religion, which they exhibit in their own case. To see aged Christians abounding in acts of devotion, assures one that they have not *grown weary in well doing*—that they do not feel themselves *above* these exercises, or *past* them, but that they take more and more pleasure in them, and feel more and more the need of them as they come nearer to heaven. In this respect they speak in an impressive manner to the world. They seem to say, "We have learned by a long experience, that religion is just what we need; and now, instead of giving it up, we mean to cherish it the more. We want it, we find, in all the trials and conflicts of this life; we want it in our present infirmities, and we shall want it yet more in the dying hour. Part with it? Never! The longer we live, the more we prize it. The more new and unusual our experience, the more necessary and precious do we find it to be. Thus does every aged Christian, in the course which he himself pursues, preach a sermon, as it were, to those around him. He says for substance: "You see how I feel, and what I do; will it not be wise and prudent in you to feel and do likewise?"

The novice in matters pertaining to the sea, would naturally

inquire of some experienced shipmaster, with what equipments he should furnish his vessel ; and if repeated trials had convinced the one whose advice he sought, that certain articles were indispensable, he would be sure to obtain these at the outset of the voyage. So should the advice of those be heeded who have sailed longest on the sea of time. And if they say it is certain destruction to sail without religion at the helm—say this by the course which they themselves pursue, is not their opinion entitled to much weight ? Should it not be heeded ; and may they not in this way accomplish much good ?

IV. Finally, Piety in the aged furnishes a beautiful illustration of the maturity and ripeness of christian character. "The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." There is constant growth and progress in the divine life. We are at first but *babes* in Christ Jesus, and reach at length the stature of full grown men. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs." "For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." The piety of the aged is the full corn in the ear. It is fully ripe. So said Eliphaz to Job : "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season." Consider through what a process of cultivation and growth the aged christian has passed ! Through what diversified scenes and experiences have the long years carried him ! Think of the rains, the storms, the sunshine under which his piety has been made to grow ; the trials, afflictions, disappointments, and losses that have darkened his way ; the glad and happy hours that have at times dispelled the darkness, and shed sunlight upon his heart. Think of all the changes, of every name and form, that he has passed through, and see how all have been like the numberless influences of nature that develope and ripen the grain for the harvest. "There was first the blade, then the ear, and now the full corn in the ear." Contemplate such a christian : his work all done ; the great object of life accomplished—its end secured—his course finished with joy, the faith kept, and he ready to be offered. How interesting the spectacle ! How appropriately compared to a shock of corn fully ripe "in his season." And when he falls how truthfully may it be said of him :—

"Of no distemper, of no blast he died,  
But full like autumn fruit that mellowed long,  
Even wondered at because he dropped no sooner."

1. A general inference from the considerations offered, is, that we should imitate the pious aged. If we would obtain the promise of long life ourselves, enjoy an *honored* and *useful* old age,

and come down at length to the grave like "a shock of corn fully ripe, we must follow in the steps of those of whom we have been speaking. And we are to remember that whatever our old age is to be, it rests with us now to determine. We are sowing the seeds of that future harvest. The tree that is stunted and deformed in its earlier years will generally carry the crookedness into its maturer growth. Let us now, then, see to it, that we lay not up any thing in store which will subsequently bring us pain.

2. Again, how thankful should the children of pious and aged parents be—thankful that they are the children of such parents—thankful that they have enjoyed their training influence and example—thankful that they have had an opportunity to recompense them somewhat for the care, attention, and love bestowed—thankful that they have been spared to share in their own honors and enjoyments—thankful for the good evidence of piety which they furnished—thankful for the cheering and comforting hope which they have left, that they are happy with their God.

3. The departure of aged christians from our midst reminds us who remain that the ranks before us are thinning out, and that we are pressing up to the fore-front of the line. We should see to it, then, that we have their piety, and can honor their place (if we are spared to reach it) as they have honored it themselves. Then, when we fall, it will be with as much to comfort our surviving friends, and with as firm and substantial a hope of heavenly rest and joy. Young or old, we must all soon die. Oh! that we may be prepared, and, like the pious who have gone before us, realize for ourselves the truthfulness of the statement, that, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

## SERMON DCXLVIII.

BY REV. JUSTUS DOOLITTLE,

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### IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER FOR THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD.

"Thy kingdom come."—MATT. vi. 10.

THAT it is natural for man to pray, all history furnishes evidences. The universal prevalence of supplication offered to idols and spirits in heathen countries, and the experience of all in times of sudden and imminent danger, or of alarming sickness, prove it. Prayer is also a revealed duty. The Bible gives important instructions in relation to its nature and right performance. It teaches us that there is only one Being to whom prayer, as a religious act, may be addressed, and instructs us, in various passages, in regard to the different objects for which prayer should be offered to that Being. The text illustrates these remarks, inasmuch as it brings to our notice that Being, and is itself a prayer for a specific object. That Being is the only true and living God; and the text is a prayer for the coming of his kingdom on the earth.



The words, "Thy kingdom come," do not relate to any form of temporal or secular government. They do not contemplate the re-establishment among men of the ancient Jewish theocracy, or the advent of Christ as a temporal prince. God's kingdom is "not of this world," else would his servants fight with carnal weapons, in order to extend its boundaries and vanquish his enemies. It is not worldly in its origin, its nature, its design, or its mode of administration. The text exclusively relates to the spiritual reign of God in the hearts of men. It implies that Satan has usurped dominion over the human race. It would reinstate God in his rightful sovereignty. It breathes an aggressive spirit against the empire of Satan; and as long as he has any willing subjects, or as long as there is any error, or wrong, or corruption on the earth, so long will it be proper to offer the petition for the coming of the kingdom of God. So long as there is any thing loved which is sinful in its nature, or any thing practiced which is defiling in its influence, any where in the world, so long will it be binding on those who love truth, who practice righteousness, to pray to the Supreme and Holy One, "Thy kingdom come." It implores the actual re-establishment of the reign of Him who is the Son of Righteousness and the Prince of Peace every where in the affections of men. It is a *prayer for the conversion of the world.*

This discourse will be devoted to the consideration of *the importance of prayer for the conversion of the world.* I remark that the importance of such prayer is seen—

I. *In the fact that Christ directed his disciples to make it.*

This direction occurs once in that part of the sermon which our Saviour delivered to his disciples while he was on the Mount of Beatitudes, called the Lord's Prayer. The language which he then employed is that of the text, "Thy kingdom come." Luke informs us that as Christ was praying in a certain place, one of his disciples recollecting that John the Baptist gave directions to his followers in regard to the duty of prayer, and desiring to receive some instruction from the Saviour in regard to the same duty, said unto him when he ceased, "Lord teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples." In the instructions which our Saviour gave in compliance with this request, occurs again the identical expression which constitutes our text—"Thy kingdom come." From these references to the Scriptures, we may learn the mind and will of our Lord in relation to this subject. It is sufficiently evident from them that he desired his followers should pray for the coming of God's reign in the hearts of men. We may also learn from a notice of the immediate connection in which the text is found in both of these places, the importance which he attached to prayer. In both it is the second petition which Christians are directed to present. Next in order after the introductory phrase or invocation, Our Father who art in heaven, comes a petition that his name may be hallowed among men, and then the petition for the coming of His kingdom on the earth. This circumstance teaches us that the coming of God's kingdom was an object whose attainment lay near to the heart of Jesus. Be it remembered that it was so dear to him, that in the very commencement of the directions he gave his followers in relation to prayer, he instructed them to pray to their Heavenly Father, for the attainment of that object. From this circumstance, may we not learn that this object should be dear to our hearts?

Let us not, however, fall into the error of inferring from it, that we are to pray for the swift spread and triumph of Christianity over every false system of religion in the *beginning* of our petitions to the throne of grace. We may not infer this any more than we may infer that we are to use precisely the language found in Christ's directions. It is not to be believed that the Lord's prayer was designed as a form for invariable use. It is evidently intended to be studied merely as a model or pattern, according to the spirit of which Christians were to be guided in their approaches to God. This is made known from the introductory remarks to the Lord's prayer, especially informing us that we are to pray simply "*after this manner.*" We may consequently clothe our desires for the

salvation of men, and the conversion of the world, in any suitable language, and express them in any part of our prayers we choose, and they will be acceptable to God. But we may not forget that in accordance with the directions of our Saviour, it is our duty to offer in some part of our petitions to the mercy seat, and in some appropriate words, our ardent longings for the coming of God's kingdom every where on the earth.

*II. In the good influence it exerts over those who offer it in sincerity and in earnest.*

Frequent and ardent prayer in behalf of any object, has a good reflex influence on the offerer. It directs and controls in a great measure his conduct relating to the attainment of that particular object, inspires in him a greater interest in all that concerns it, and prompts to increased efforts to promote and secure it. The pastor who wrestles with God often and earnestly in secret prayer, in behalf of his people, will be very likely to labor with a warmer heart, and with more zealous efforts to promote their spiritual welfare, than though he seldom or never thus prayed. His prayers for the flock, over which God has made him shepherd, will have a good and great reflex influence on himself. As he addresses them from the sacred desk, as he leads them in the devotional exercises of the sanctuary, as he mingles with them in the bosoms of their families, and as he walks by the wayside in their company, he will strive to accomplish that for which he so ardently and so frequently prays in secret at home. The feelings of his soul will continually seek a development in appropriate actions for the spiritual good of his pastoral charge.

The mother who ardently longs for the conversion of her son, and who frequents her closet to spend an hour there in its silence and solitude, bowed in prayer before God in his behalf, will be most sure to manifest in her actions a deep and sincere interest in his salvation. Faithfully, yet kindly and winningly as only a mother can, she will tell him of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, warn him of the danger of continued impenitency, and point him to Christ as the only hope of the sinner. With a tearful eye, and with a faltering voice she will endeavor to lead him to the Saviour. In her conversation with him, and in her deportment towards him, on every suitable occasion, she will exhibit her intense desire that he should become a christian.

Similar will be the reflex influence of frequent and earnest prayer for the evangelization of the world over those who offer it. It will prompt them to corresponding and appropriate action for the attainment of the desired object. Those who pray with their whole souls, "Thy kingdom come," will be ready to do according to their ability in some effective way for the hastening of the universal prevalence of God's spiritual reign on the earth. If their hearts are pervaded with the spirit of this petition, they will desire to perform all within their power, in order to promote the conversion of the world, either by the exertion of personal influence and personal labor, or by contributing liberally of the property which has been entrusted to their stewardship. There is a great and fast increasing demand on Christendom, at the present time, for a multitude of men, and a large amount of funds to be employed in the work of evangelizing the nations. To every heathen country on the globe, with one or two exceptions, the christian missionary has free access; and from many a pagan land, in loud and urgent tones, comes the Macedonian cry unto the churches, "Come over and help us." The supply often and of money needed to meet the present, and the future demands for help made by a perishing world, will not be found till the churches shall offer with becoming earnestness and frequency, the prayer to the God of Missions, "Thy kingdom come." When she thus prays, the wants of pagan nations will not long remain unsupplied. The appeal sent to her from China, from Hindostan, from Palestine, from Persia, from Turkey, from Southern and Western Africa, and from different parts of Europe and America, will then find a response in many a pious heart. To the voice of the Lord, heard in his providence saying, "Whom shall I send?" many a reply will be made in the language of the prophet, "Here am I; send me." The petition, "Thy kingdom come," proceed-

ing to the Father from the heart of the church with one united and fervent voice, while it would be accepted by Him, would have a very salutary reflex influence over her. It would be partly answered in leading her to devote a multitude of her sons and her daughters to the work of "going into all the world and preaching the Gospel to every creature." The plea of men dying for lack of knowledge in heathen countries, wafted to the ear of Christendom by every breeze that fans the ocean's bosom, would not be made in vain, but the returning wave would bear to them a vessel freighted with the bread of life.

As well might we expect that the pastor who wrestles with God in importunate prayer in behalf of his flock, would leave it to perish without making earnest personal efforts for its salvation, or that the mother who often and ardently prays in secret for the conversion of her son, would exhibit a stolid indifference in relation to the interests of his soul, as that those who supplicate the throne of grace with frequent and fervent petitions for the evangelization of the world, would neglect to use the other appropriate and necessary means for its attainment. As personal labor is one of the divinely appointed agencies for saving men, there may be readily found the needed number of men willing to consecrate themselves to the work of missions. But not only would such prayer offered by the church lead many to labor *in person* in the work of conveying the Gospel to heathen lands, it would also result in furnishing the needed amount of funds to prosecute with becoming vigor the divine enterprise of converting the world. It would infuse into the hearts of those who remain at home a spirit of benevolence and liberality commensurate with the magnitude of the undertaking, and worthy of the glorious triumph over sin it contemplates.

Now it is doubtless true that some give to the cause of missions who pray little or none at all for the success of that cause. Giving to promote the coming of God's kingdom in the hearts of men, is often neither preceded, nor accompanied, nor followed, by earnest prayer for that object on the part of the giver. But it is believed that sincere and ardent *praying* for the conversion of the world is ever attended by *giving*, according to ability, for the promotion of that enterprise. He who engages in present and importunate supplication in behalf of the heathen, will not be likely to return a negative reply when solicited on suitable occasions to contribute of his substance to send them the Gospel. He will not shun the sanctuary when he expects an opportunity will be presented for him to make an expression of his desire for their salvation, by casting into the Lord's treasury such an amount as the voice of God's word, in view of the urgent need of lost men, shows to be his duty. Nor will he give grudgingly for this purpose. He will do it cheerfully, willingly, with satisfaction and with pleasure; will not only love to pray for the pagan world, but will also love to aid missions, as far as he can, consistently with his other duties as a christian. Frequent and earnest prayer for the evangelization of the world, is therefore highly important, inasmuch as it exerts a salutary reflex influence on those who offer it, leading some to devote themselves in person to the work of missions, and others to furnish the requisite amount of funds to promote its attainment.

### III. *In the encouragement it affords those who have consecrated themselves to labor in person for that object.*

It is of great practical interest to the minister of the Gospel to know that the church to which he preaches the word of life, remembers him frequently and fervently in her prayers. We are all, probably, well aware, how encouraging and gratifying it is to the pastor of any people to be assured that they ardently supplicate for him as they bow around the family and in the closet. Such knowledge is the source of much comfort and hope to him in the discharge of his arduous duties. He can preach and labor more effectively, than if he was without their sympathy and forgotten in their prayers. It imparts a cheerfulness to his feelings, and thus, while it materially promotes his usefulness as a minister, greatly increases his happiness as a man.

So it is of great practical interest to the missionary of the cross to know that the church generally pray with an appropriate fervency for the conversion of the

world, and especially to know that those christians with whom he is personally acquainted in his native land, remember him and pray with earnestness in his behalf. Such knowledge must, in the very nature of the case, afford him peculiar encouragement to labor with ardent zeal and unremitting cheerfulness in the hope of being instrumental in the conversion of some of the heathen among whom he lives. Consider for a moment the circumstances in which a foreign missionary is situated. He is far away from his native land, his home and his kindred, and from those who sympathise with him in his trials and in his toils. He is surrounded with strangers. He has access to little or no congenial society. Those with whom he mingles, are mostly vile and ignorant, often ungrateful, perhaps disposed to misrepresent his motives, and place a false construction on his actions. It is true that he feels that he is discharging his duty to the heathen and to his God, and is assured that he has the approbation and blessing of his Father in Heaven. Still, it is as natural as it is reasonable for him to cast a frequent thought across the ocean to the port where he once lived, and where he left many loved friends, with whom he often took sweet christian counsel, and bowed in prayer together. The knowledge that they yet remember him, and pray for him, when no ear hears them and no eye sees them but God's; at the time of the morning and the evening sacrifice, and in the monthly concert, will constantly produce great joy in his heart, and afford great encouragement to him as he labors on in some humble station in the hope of winning heathen souls to Christ. He loves to recall his former christian friends, and his thoughts linger about them, because he feels that they must be still interested in the missionary work, and delight to pray for its rapid success.

But suppose that in some way he should ascertain that the church with which he was connected in his native land, and those christian friends with whom he was personally and intimately acquainted, restrained prayer in behalf of the world, and that they neglected or forgot often and ardently to remember him in his toils and trials, his perils and self-denials, what feelings of loneliness and desertion would fill his heart! How would his soul be disquieted within him! With how little encouragement could he labor, except as he himself derived it from the throne of grace in answer to his own agonizing prayers! The smiles of his Heavenly Father would now be his only joy and hope, and the promises of the Bible his only rock of consolation. He would not be alone. Oh no: for the blessed Saviour has assured him, "Lo I am with you alway." Nevertheless, he would feel that a great, and in some respects an essential, element of his happiness and his usefulness was wanting. Oh, how deep and keen would be his feelings as his thoughts travel back to those whom he left in his native land, and contemplate their want of interest in the work of missions, as evidenced by the fewness and the coldness of their prayers in his behalf. I recollect reading, several years since, of a missionary and his wife in the foreign field, who had just received a long expected letter from home. The wife, in high spirits, hastily broke the seal, and began to glance over the contents. She had read but a few moments, when the letter fell from her hands, and she burst into tears. Her husband, supposing it contained intelligence of some alarming sickness or sudden death among her personal friends, and preparing to remind her of the hopes and the consolations which only the Gospel affords to the sorrowing and the afflicted, kindly enquired the cause of this strong emotion. He at length learned that the letter communicated the news of the suspension of the prayer meetings in the village where her parents resided. And, added the wife, when her tears and her sobs allowed her to speak again, "*We had better go home. It is of no use to remain here unless our friends can pray for us.*" Similar, I doubt not, would be the feelings with which his heart would be pervaded, and similar the conclusion to which he would come, of many a missionary in a heathen land, should he become convinced that the church generally, and that his personal christian friends particularly, for any reason, failed to pray with frequency and fervency for those who are devoting their lives to the work of evangelizing the world. It is, then, highly important that frequent and earnest prayer for the coming of God's kingdom on the earth, should be made by the christian, inasmuch as it affords great and peculiar encouragement to those who are laboring directly to promote that object.

*IV. Prayer is the only effectual means of bringing down God's blessing upon us.*

We have thus far considered prayer for the conversion of the world as an important duty of the christian arising from the directions of Christ to his disciples, from the good reflex influence it produces on the offerer, and from the encouragement it affords those who labor for the evangelization of the heathen. We now contemplate it for a moment as absolutely indispensable in the divine economy, from the fact, that it is the only effectual means of bringing down God's blessing on efforts put forth for the conversion of men. This is the strongest and most important argument which can possibly be urged in favor of frequent and earnest prayer for the speedy coming of the reign of righteousness on the earth. Without such prayer offered by the disciples of Christ, Satan's empire will never be demolished, nor God's spiritual kingdom be established. Success will not be granted to the personal labors of christians to evangelize the heathen, and all pecuniary contributions for that object will be also in vain, unless the fervent, effectual prayer which avails much with God, shall ascend to Him from the Church. "I have planted," said Paul, "Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." Such was the experience of christians 1800 years ago, and such has been the experience of christians since that period, and such will ever be the experience of those who are "laborers together with God," in the work of evangelizing the world. For "neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." The most wisely directed efforts have never resulted in the conversion of men, independent of the operation of the Holy Spirit; and they will never result in the salvation of a single soul, except as a blessing from above shall be added to them. All means within the control of man will prove powerless and unavailing to rescue the heathen from sin, unless grace from the Most High shall render them effectual in leading them to the Saviour. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." The missionary aims at producing spiritual results. Now the Holy Spirit is the divine agent, whose presence and authority are needed to sanction and confirm all human efforts, in order that they may be successful in securing these results; and prayer, sincere and importunate prayer, is the appointed means of causing the descent of this Agent.

"Who but thou, Almighty Spirit,  
Can the heathen world reclaim?  
Men may preach, but till thou favor,  
Heathens will be still the same."

From these remarks, the relation which frequent and prevailing supplication sustains to the efficacy of human means for the conversion of the race, will be evident to all. In the economy of the divine government, it is of indispensable importance, in order that the smiles of God may attend and succeed the labors of his children to restore this revolted world to its allegiance to its rightful sovereign. It is especially necessary to urge the importance of earnest prayer for the evangelization of the world, because it is the tendency of our age to *do much* for the spread of the gospel, but *pray comparatively little* for the divine blessing to rest on efforts made for that object. Like the Jews of old, good men in our day seem anxiously to ask, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?"—forgetting to a lamentable degree that no "*works*" are acceptable to God only so far as they are accompanied with corresponding faith and prayer. As evidence of the truth of the assertion that there is a tendency in our time to *do much* but *pray little*, witness, on the one hand, the numerous religious societies existing in Christendom, designed to promote vital christianity, such as the Sabbath School, the Tract, the Bible, the Home and Foreign Missionary, and the large amount of funds contributed annually by the church for their support. On the other hand, the usually thin attendance on the Monthly Concert, and on the weekly prayer meetings, the little fervency and interest felt and exhibited at the hour of family and secret devotions, for the blessings of the Holy Spirit to render successful the Saviour's means used for the conversion of the world. Now it would betoken the



existence of a better spirit in the church, if, while there should be no diminution in zealously "working the works of God," there should be a very large increase of more fervent and agonizing prayer for the coming of his kingdom. Such a course, while it would honor God more, would, according to the divine plan, make the means used by his servants efficacious in the conversion of a greater number of souls. The united, fervent and effectual prayers of his people, in connection with other divinely recognized and appointed instrumentalities, are destined ultimately to achieve a complete and glorious triumph over sin. I would that we all might feel how little worth, in the sight of God, are our professions of interest and acts of benevolence, and our labors in the cause of missions, unless they are accompanied by appropriate and importunate supplication for the success of that cause. O that all who love God, and take delight in the spread of the Gospel among the heathen, might realize the indispensable importance of sincere and earnest prayer as the only effectual way of bringing down the blessing of the Holy Spirit on the efforts made for their conversion.

The petition, Thy Kingdom Come, [addressed to Jehovah as a memorial expressive of the earnest wishes of his loyal subjects on the earth, will ever be in order in the court of heaven. The Advocate, Christ Jesus, takes it all covered with tears, and presents it to Him, and intercedes for its acceptance and approval, pleading the merits of the propitiatory sacrifice he made of himself for the sins of the world. As his only begotten and dearly beloved Son, Jesus reminds the Father of the promise made in the councils of eternity, and asks for the bestowal of the heathen upon him for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. The united prayer of the petitioners, congenial to the feelings of Jehovah, in accordance with his eternal purposes, will be granted, and the kingdoms of this world will speedily become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.

Christian hearer—in view of the considerations which have been urged, will you not, when you daily visit the closet, plead in greater earnest, and in the exercise of a more active faith, in behalf of a lost race, than you have ever yet done? When you bow in the social circle, and in the weekly prayer meetings of the church, will you not supplicate, with a becoming importunity, for the prevalence of God's spiritual reign among all the nations of the earth? At your evening and morning family devotions, will you not remember the heathen in their deep degradation and sinfulness, and offer a sincere and fervent petition for their rescue? In the sleepless watches of the silent night, and often while engaged in your usual pursuits, abroad or at home, will you not elevate your soul in a voiceless prayer to God, in the short, but comprehensive request, "Thy Kingdom Come?" And especially will you not regularly attend the Monthly Concert of prayer for the conversion of the world? How can you better manifest your desires for the salvation of the heathen, than by uniting monthly in concerted prayer with your brethren throughout the world to Almighty God for his blessing to rest on all the means employed for their conversion? I invite you to attend the monthly Concert in the name of 800,000,000 of dying men. Consider well the unspeakable importance of such prayer, and the immense number of those for whom you should offer it. Contemplate the approaching judgment when you will be called upon by Jesus himself to give an account for your principles and your practice in relation to this duty. Let not any consideration of little moment have an unfavorable influence on your decision. Let your practice be such as an enlightened conscience will approve, and a Holy God will justify. The spiritual condition of many a deathless and priceless soul in pagan lands, may, in the providence of God, be intimately connected with the reply you now make in your hearts, and the course you will hereafter pursue, in relation to this question; and will you not then regularly attend the monthly concert of prayer for the conversion of the world?